Shall we dance? Yes, at Rainbow Prom

DETAILS

The Rainbow Prom will be 8 p.m. to midnight June 4 at the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado, 315 E. Costilla St. Tickets are $10 per person. For information, call 328-1056.

By LISA MARTÍNEZ
THE GAZETTE

When Chris Tong attended his high school prom two years ago, people stared at him.

He was told he couldn't dance the way he wanted and, feeling uncomfortable, he left after about 30 minutes.

His date was another teenage boy, and Tong felt discriminated against because of his sexual orientation.

"I knew it was an iffy situation, but I thought I had every right to be there," said Tong, now 18.

This year, Tong is planning a prom on his own and is inviting gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. And they can bring whomever they want as dates.

The Rainbow Prom event is scheduled June 4 at the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado. Partygoers can dance, snack and socialize — just as at a traditional high school prom.

Inside/Out Youth Services, a local advocacy group that works with gay teens, is sponsoring the event. Tong is asking other organizations and companies to donate money or supplies for the event.

He hired a deejay who will play music from different genres. Attendees will elect a prom king and queen.

To get the word out, he is showing up

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The Gazette

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GAY PROM: Dream come true for some

FROM PAGE 1

at events sponsored by gay advocacy organizations, and he is putting up fliers.

People of various ages are buying tickets, renting limousines and making reservations at upscale restaurants.

Tong organized a gay prom last year, but it was thrown together at the last minute and few people came. This time, he expects more than 100 folks to turn out for the prom.

Some will be high school students who may choose this event over their school proms. Some will be middle-age gay people who never attended a prom because they didn't feel comfortable bringing someone of the same sex. Some will attend Rainbow Prom simply to relive a high school memory.

Tong is more interested in erasing his memories of the Pine Creek High School prom.

He and his gay friends were targeted and watched with a scornful eye, he said. They left because of the hostility they felt from administrators, he said.

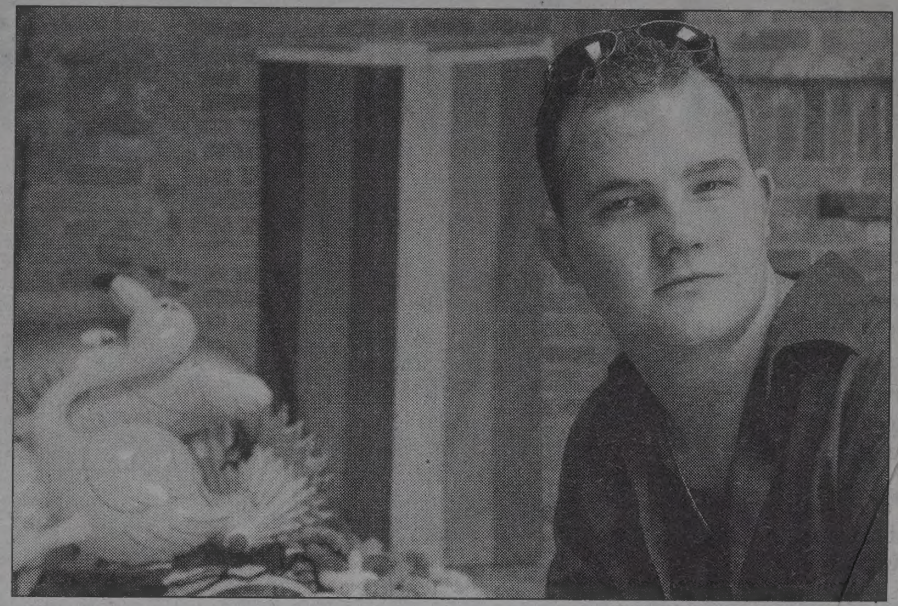
He dropped out of Pine Creek and earned a GED.

Principal Steve Moran wouldn't comment about what happened at the 2003 prom. District 20 spokeswoman Nanette Anderson said all students — no matter their sexuality — were watched carefully.

Tong and his friends, along with several straight students, were warned that their dancing was inappropriate, and they'd have to leave if it didn't stop, she said.

The students complied, and Tong and his friends left on their own, Anderson said.

Tong's June 4 event will be the first prom experience for Joanne Entjer, 26. She and her girlfriend, who hasn't come out publicly about her sexual orientation, plan to enjoy all the traditional prom hoopla, including a nice dinner before the big event.



JERILEE BENNETT, THE GAZETTE

Chris Tong, 18, will use tropical decorations for the Rainbow Prom on June 4 at the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado in Colorado Springs. Tong organized the prom last year after he and his boyfriend felt hostility and left his high school prom.

Although she's excited about attending her first prom, Entjer is happier for the younger participants.

Now that she's in her 20s, nothing prevents her from going to social events with her partner.

"I'm an adult. I can make my own decisions now," she said. "But they're not. They need something like this."

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SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2005

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1 killed, 5 hurt in Stetson Hills crash

1 of injuries is critical

By BILL McKEOWN
THE GAZETTE

A young woman was killed instantly, her companion was critically injured and two children were thrown into the roadway in a devastating collision Saturday afternoon at the intersection of Stetson Hills and Tutt boulevards.

The collision happened about 4:30 p.m. when a Dodge Durango westbound on Stetson Hills apparently ran a red light and struck the driver's side of a green Honda Civic being driven southbound on Tutt, said Colorado Springs police Sgt. Tommy Thompson.

The impact killed the female driver of the Honda, whom police estimated to be 25 to 30 years old. Her male companion suffered a head injury and was taken in critical condition to Penrose Main Hospital.

Two children, whom police estimated to be 6 and 9 years old, were thrown from the Durango when it flipped onto its top after the collision. Paramedics found the children conscious but possibly suffering from head injuries, said Lt. James Eddy of the Colorado Springs Fire Department.

The children and two adults in the sport utility vehicle were taken to Memorial Hospital.

As of late Saturday, police had not released the names of the dead driver or the injured.

After the impact, the pilotless Honda rolled a couple hundred feet west into the eastbound lanes of Stetson Hills before coming to rest at a curb. Police draped a red tarp over the car to shield the woman's body from onlookers until the arrival of crash investigators and the Coroner's Office.

Closer to the intersection, the blue Durango lay on its smashed top, its contents scattered onto the street. The collision closed busy Stetson Hills from Tutt to nearby Powers Boulevard for several hours.

Thompson said it could be a couple of days before traffic investigators determine whether excessive speed or alcohol played a role in the crash.

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PRICE CHAMBERS, THE GAZETTE

A Colorado Springs police officer inspects a Dodge Durango involved in a fatal two-car crash Saturday at Stetson Hills and Tutt boulevards. The Durango was westbound on Stetson Hills when it collided with a southbound Honda Civic on Tutt, killing the driver.